



Unveiling and Dedication of Tablet

IN MEMORY OF

MATTHEW ALEXANDER HENSON

CO-DISCOVERER OF THE NORTH POLE WITH

ADMIRAL ROBERT EDWIN PEARY

APRIL 6, 1909



THE STATE HOUSE

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 1961 — 11:00 A. M.

HIS EXCELLENCY J. MILLARD TAWES

GOVERNOR

PROGRAM

Herbert M. Frisby

Chairman, Governor's Advisory Committee, Matthew A. Henson Memorial
Former U. S. War Correspondent, Northwest Service and Alaska Commands

Presiding

"We Speak His Name In Highest Glory, Honor
and Reverence—Matthew Alexander Henson"

INVOCATION Captain James W. Kelly, CHC, U. S. Navy
Chaplain, U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland

NATIONAL ANTHEM Directed by Mrs. Joyce McManus
Teacher, Bates High School, Annapolis, Maryland

PLEDGE TO THE UNITED STATES FLAG H. Russell Frisby, Jr.
Boy Scout Cub Pack No. 563, Baltimore, Maryland

PRESENTATION OF MASTER OF CEREMONIES ... The Honorable J. Alvin Jones
State Senator, Fourth District, Baltimore, Maryland

PRESENTATION OF THE GOVERNOR The Honorable John T. Parran, Jr.
State Senator, Charles County, Maryland

GREETINGS His Excellency, J. Millard Tawes
Governor of the State of Maryland

CHORUS Robert E. Peary High School
Rockville, Maryland

"Climb Ev'ry Mountain"—Rodgers and Hammerstein

ADDRESS The Honorable Neil H. Swanson
World Affairs Editor, The Baltimore News-Post and Sunday American

REMARKS The Honorable Andrew T. Hatcher
Assistant Press Secretary, The White House

Congressman A. Clayton Powell
Pastor, Abyssinian Baptist Church, New York City

The Honorable James C. Evans
Counselor to U. S. Assistant Secretary of Defense

Commander Edward Peary Stafford, USN
Grandson of Admiral Robert E. Peary

The Honorable Cliff W. Mackay
Editor, The Afro-American Newspapers

Dr. Russell G. Frazier
Explorers Club, Salt Lake City, Utah

Dr. Fred L. Dunn, Jr.
Principal, Robert E. Peary High School

CHORUS Coppin State Teachers College
Baltimore, Maryland

"Alleluia"—Randall Thompson

PROGRAM—CONTINUED

- PRESENTATION OF THE MEMORIAL TABLET Albert P. Backhaus
Director of Public Improvements, State of Maryland
- ACCEPTANCE OF MEMORIAL Dr. Martin D. Jenkins
President, Morgan State College, Baltimore, Maryland
- REMARKS Mrs. Matthew Alexander Henson
- RECOGNITION OF DISTINGUISHED VISITORS, INCLUDING
The Honorable Pedro A. Sanjuan
Assistant Chief of Protocol, Department of State
His Excellency William M. Q. Halm
Ghanian Embassy
His Excellency Julius M. Udochi
Nigerian Embassy
His Excellency S. Edward Peal
Liberian Embassy
- REMARKS AND PRESENTATION Herbert M. Frisby
Arctic Correspondent and Researcher
- CHORUS Wiley H. Bates High School Band and Choir
Annapolis, Maryland
"The Battle Hymn of the Republic"—Wilhousky
- PROCESSIONAL
- DEDICATION Rev. Robert T. Newbold, Jr.
Pastor, Grace Presbyterian Church, Baltimore, Maryland
- UNVEILING OF TABLET Mrs. Matthew Alexander Henson
"Maryland, My Maryland"
- PRESENTATION OF MARYLAND FLAG Mrs. J. Millard Tawes
First Lady of Maryland
attended by
Mrs. J. William Middendorf, Jr.
Member, The Governor's Advisory Committee, Matthew A. Henson Memorial
- BENEDICTION Dr. Arthur J. Payne
Pastor, Enon Baptist Church, Baltimore, Maryland
- HONOR GUARD IN LOBBY OF STATE HOUSE Boy Scout Troop, No. 268
Bates High School, Annapolis, Maryland

Pianos used on this occasion—Courtesy of Academy Music Co., Inc., Annapolis, Maryland
The Maryland League of Women's Clubs will receive in honor of Mrs. Matthew A. Henson in the Governor's Reception Room on the Balcony following these ceremonies.

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 23

By Senators Jones and Parran

Senate Resolution proposing that permanent memorials be erected to honor Matthew Alexander Henson.

Matthew A. Henson, Negro, was born August 8, 1866, in Charles County, Maryland. When working in Washington, D. C., he met Robert E. Peary, then a young naval engineer, who persuaded young Henson to accompany him on his explorations to locate the North Pole.

Henson accompanied Peary on seven Arctic trips, the last culminating in the discovery of the North Pole, April 6, 1909.

Peary, Henson and four Eskimos planted the U. S. Flag at the North Pole—the first in the world to attain that distinction.

Peary, in his memoirs, has given most of the credit to his success to Henson—because of his endurance, loyalty and Arctic skills.

April 6, 1949, the U. S. Department of Defense brought Henson to Washington, D. C., and gave him a citation in the Pentagon for his contributions to Arctic and Polar exploration.

April 6, 1954, President Eisenhower invited Mr. and Mrs. Matthew Henson to the White House. He was commended by the President of the United States for his bravery, courage and contributions to Arctic exploration.

Mr. Henson has been honored by many organizations, civic bodies and some scientific societies. He was the recipient of a Congressional Medal and another from the Chicago Geographic Society.

Upon his death, the Maryland State Legislature passed resolutions lamenting his passing.

August 12, 1956, the U. S. Air Force flew Herbert M. Frisby, Afro-American Arctic Correspondent and Head of the Science Department at Douglass High School, Baltimore, Maryland, over the North Pole where he dropped a U. S. Flag and bronze plaque in Mr. Henson's honor.

Since Henson's passing, Mr. Frisby has secured from Mr. Henson's widow the remaining Arctic artifacts and presented them to Morgan State College, where they are now on display.

Attempts are being made to have Henson's remains re-interred in U. S. National Cemetery at Arlington, beside those of Admiral Peary. This has not yet been realized.

Today, the Arctic and Polar regions are our main bulwark of security and defense against a potential enemy.

April 6, 1959, marked the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Discovery of the North Pole by Peary, Henson and the four Eskimos. A special

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 23—CONTINUED

U. S. 4-cent postage stamp was issued commemorating Peary's contribution, but the State of Maryland has not given official permanent recognition to the accomplishments of Matthew Alexander Henson.

In 1959, the General Assembly of Maryland passed House Joint Resolution No. 29, wherein it was resolved that a plaque or monument be established on the campus of the Pomonkey High School, Charles County, Maryland, as a permanent memorial to Matthew Alexander Henson.

Governor J. Millard Tawes, the Board of Public Works, the Director of Public Improvements and a Committee appointed by the Governor have studied and considered the most effective manner in which this project may be executed. They are agreed that a permanent plaque would serve as a greater inspiration to our youth, have increased Historical significance and add greatly to the prestige of the State of Maryland, on whose soil the said Matthew A. Henson was born, if placed in the State House, and if a small replica of that plaque was erected at Pomonkey High School, Charles County, Maryland; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, by the Senate of Maryland, That a permanent plaque, honoring Matthew A. Henson, provided for by this body in 1959 by House Joint Resolution No. 29, be placed in the State House and that it consist of a bronze tablet, suitably inscribed and dedicated with appropriate exercises; and be it further

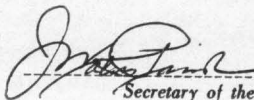
Resolved, that a small replica of this plaque be erected on the wall of the entrance of the Pomonkey High School, Charles County, Maryland, and be it further

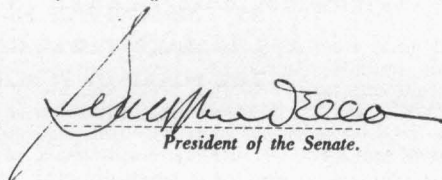
Resolved, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Honorable J. Millard Tawes, Governor of Maryland, and to Mrs. Lucy Henson, widow of the late Matthew Alexander Henson, 246 West 150th Street, New York City, New York.

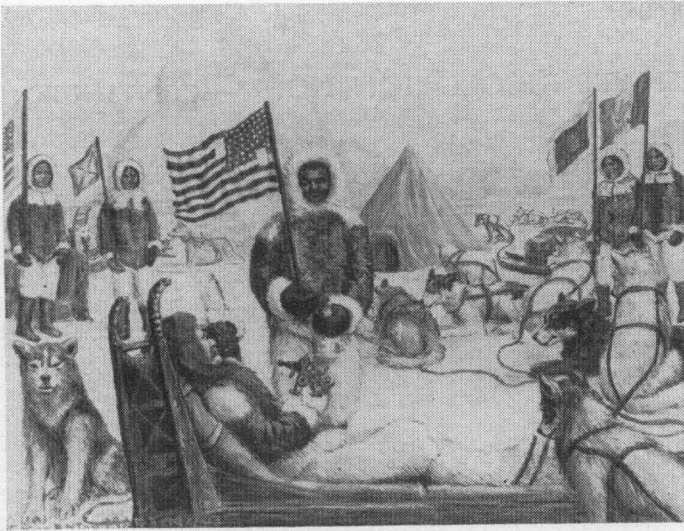
Read and adopted.

By the Senate, March 9, 1961.

By order, J. Waters Parrish, Secretary.


Secretary of the Senate.


President of the Senate.



DISCOVERY OF THE NORTH POLE: Copy of an oil painting showing the discovery of the North Pole, April 6, 1909. The painting was made from a description by Matthew A. Henson, and is authenticated by references in Peary's book, "The North Pole" (1909, 1910).

The painting shows Peary in his sled, Henson holding the U. S. Flag, and the four Eskimo participants, Ooqueah (Ookeah), Ootah, Eginwah and Seeglo.

(Copy of Tablet Inscription)

MATTHEW ALEXANDER HENSON
CO-DISCOVERER OF THE NORTH POLE

WITH

ADMIRAL ROBERT EDWIN PEARY

APRIL 6, 1909

* * * * *

BORN: AUGUST 8, 1866

DIED: MARCH 9, 1955

SON OF MARYLAND

EXEMPLIFICATION OF COURAGE, FORTITUDE AND PATRIOTISM,

WHOSE VALIANT DEEDS OF NOBLE DEVOTION

UNDER THE COMMAND OF ADMIRAL ROBERT EDWIN PEARY,

IN PIONEER ARCTIC EXPLORATION AND DISCOVERY,

ESTABLISHED EVERLASTING PRESTIGE AND GLORY

FOR HIS STATE AND COUNTRY

BY THE STATE OF MARYLAND

J. MILLARD TAWES, GOVERNOR

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Department of Public Improvements

Albert P. Backhaus, Director	Garrett O. Billmire, Deputy Director
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Tablet Inscription Committee

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Courtesy

James M. Brown	Anthony Howes
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J. Spencer Hammond	Joseph C. Parks	Dr. J. Alexander Wiseman

MATTHEW (MATT) ALEXANDER HENSON

Matthew ("Matt") Alexander Henson was born August 8, 1866 on a farm, the site of a former slave market, in Nanjemoy, Charles County, Maryland. Henson, the man destined to become the first person to locate and stand on the Top of the World, was born in virtual obscurity. Little is known of his early boyhood. Around the age of eleven, he ran away from Nanjemoy one night and walked to Washington, D. C. There, he divided his time between working in a restaurant operated by his aunt, Mrs. Janey Moore, and attending irregularly, the N Street Elementary School.

Henson left Washington at the age of thirteen, walked to Baltimore, Maryland and located around the waterfront. Soon thereafter, as one without a home, he shipped as a cabin boy on a schooner under the command of a Captain Childs. This skipper

continued

MATTHEW (MATT) ALEXANDER HENSON—CONTINUED

taught him the rudiments of simple mathematics and navigation. The voyage carried him to China and return.

Returning to Washington, he found employment as a porter in a hat shop on Pennsylvania Avenue. One day, the then Lt. Robert E. Peary visited this store. He observed Matt Henson at work and became impressed with him. Matt was invited by Lt. Peary to join him on a canal surveying expedition to Nicaragua. Henson accepted.

When this mission was completed, Peary became interested in heading an expedition in search of the North Pole, which at that time, was the intensive objective of many nations. Henson accompanied Peary on each of his seven expeditions into the Arctic and Polar regions.

Matt saved Peary's life when he was attacked by an infuriated musk ox, and also on one occasion rescued him from starvation. He was chosen by Peary to be a member of the party of six to make the final dash to the Pole. Peary paid him this compliment—"He is my most valuable companion. I could not get along without him."

Overcome with exhaustion and crippled by the loss of most of his toes by frostbite, Peary sent Henson forward to make final observations and calculations, and await his arrival. Forty minutes later, Peary, driven up on his sled by four Eskimos, joined Henson. Peary's check confirmed the discovery of the North Pole.

90 N. Lat., North Pole

April 6, 1909

Arrived here today, 27 marches from Cape Columbia.

I have with me 5 men, Matthew Henson, colored, Ootah, Eginwah, Seegloo and Oøkeah, Eskimos; 5 sledges and 38 dogs.

The expedition under my command has succeeded in reaching the Pole . . . for the honor and prestige of the United States of America.

Robert E. Peary

United States Navy

(From Log Book of Admiral Peary)

"This scene my eyes will never see again. Plant the Stars and Stripes over there, Matt, . . . At the North Pole."—Peary.

Aside from Peary, the leader of the expeditions, Henson has been given most of the credit for the success of the discovery of the North Pole. This is because of his courage and daring, ability to withstand the most rigorous climate and exposure, mastery of the Eskimo language and their admiration of him, his skill in sled building, driving and igloo construction. These credits were accorded him by all the surviving members of the polar expeditions.

In recognition of his contributions, Mr. Henson was awarded the Master of Science degree by Morgan State College and Howard University, a Congressional Medal, Life Membership in the Explorers Club, a medal from the Chicago Geographical Society, a citation by the U. S. Department of Defense, a commendation from President Dwight D. Eisenhower, at the White House, numerous medals and plaques from civic organizations.

On August 12, 1956, a memorial tribute to him was dropped on the North Pole from a U. S. Air Force plane by Afro-American Arctic Correspondent, Herbert M. Frisby, the author of this biographical sketch.

There is Henson Bay, in northwest Arctic Canada, named as a tribute to him.

Mr. Henson died March 9, 1955 in New York City. He is survived by Mrs. Lucy J. Henson, his widow.

Since his passing, he has been memorialized by His Excellency, J. Millard Tawes, Governor of Maryland, proclaiming April 6, 1959, the 50th Anniversary of the Discovery of the North Pole, as MATTHEW ALEXANDER HENSON DAY in the State of Maryland.

By action of the Maryland General Assemblies in 1959 and 1961, provisions were made for the establishment of permanent memorials to Mr. Henson, one to be placed in the State House at Annapolis, and a small replica of the same on the campus of the Pomonkey High School, Charles County, both in Maryland.

(H. M. F.)

For further details see—

Henson, Matthew A.: *A Negro Explorer at the North Pole* (1912)

Life Magazine: *Discovery of the North Pole* (May 12, 1951)

MacMillan, Admiral Donald B.: *Matthew Henson*: Explorers Magazine, Fall, 1955

Peary, Admiral Robert E.: *The North Pole* (1910) [Contains 13 references]

Robinson, Bradley: *Dark Companion* (1947)

Frisby, Herbert M.: *Matt Henson Helped Discover North Pole*, Afro-American Newspapers, April 15, 1952